

GS1 Canada Writing Style Guidelines



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GS1 Canada Style and Writing Guidelines

Introduction

The purpose of this style guide is to improve communication by creating consistency across documents. It's important for GS1 Canada to have a style and voice that's consistent in tone, spelling and formatting for unified branding and messaging. Each GS1 Member Organisation's style and tone is unique to meet the needs to their respective audience, while still taking cues from GS1 Global to ensure a degree of continuity in messaging.

Please read through this guide, familiarize yourself with the content and refer to it as needed – it's easy to search and use. This resource is a writing reference that answers questions about the language used by GS1 Canada and gives multiple authors across the organization a single touchpoint.

To ensure uniformity of language not just across GS1 Canada, but also across industry, we are deferring to Government of Canada guidelines on language, grammar and spelling usage. For further reference, and for stylistic questions not covered here, you can look to the [Canada.ca Content Style Guide](#).

Remember: It's your responsibility as the author of your content to ensure that it's clear and understandable to your readers.

Writing Style

Tone and Voice

- Our brand tone and voice should always be professional, friendly, approachable, informative, helpful and conversational.
- Be conversational but not too informal - don't use "slang" and limit the use of colloquialisms.
- While our brand voice will remain consistent across documents, the language and terms we use should be adapted to the industries/sectors/audiences we are writing for.

General Guidelines

- Use plain language, minimize use of industry jargon, acronyms and "GS1 Speak" and avoid overly complicated messaging. Writing in plain language doesn't mean over-simplifying or leaving out critical information, and actually makes critical information more accessible, readable and understandable for all literacy levels.
 - Replace long, multi-syllabic words with short, simple, everyday words that most people understand and use.
 - Be concise – edit your work to remove unnecessary words and distil complex concepts into simple terms and short sentences to help readers grasp points easily.
- Don't assume the audience is familiar with your subject matter. Know your audience and be as clear as possible with your writing.
- If using acronyms, be sure to spell out the whole phrase the first time it appears in your document with the acronym in brackets.
- Whenever possible use an active vs. passive voice. In an active sentence, the subject does the action, and the sentence is clear and direct. In a passive sentence, it may not be clear who or what is doing the action. Examples: Active: "Your trading partners require you to..." **Passive:** "You may be required to ..."

- Whenever possible use the positive form instead of the negative form, unless something has serious consequences when the negative form can be used to emphasize that something isn't possible or should not be done.
- Be inclusive. Make gender-inclusive writing your standard practice and avoid references to gender whenever possible.
- Always ensure your content is presented on the appropriate [branded template](#).
- **Always proofread your content before sending.**

The Five Cs of Communication

GS1 Global has provided guidance for all member organisations to strive for in both external and internal communications and can be used as a handy checklist for your written content.

1. Customer-centric: focus on what our subscribers need and how we can provide support.
2. Clear: keep it simple and easy to understand by all, without complex industry jargon.
3. Concise: be short and to the point.
4. Compelling: be convincing and inspiring, think of your audience and use words that are relevant to and will resonate with them.
5. Consistent: speak with one voice, using simple, plain, clear language and a professional tone.

GS1 Canada Language Guidelines

Trusted Strategic Partner

GS1 Canada is a Trusted Strategic Partner to industry.

- Always reference in this way: title case and no commas.
- Never abbreviate to TSP.

How to Reference ECCnet Industry Managed Solutions (IMs)

- Always reference as ECCnet Industry Managed Solutions using title case.
- **Never** reference as "solutions" on their own, but it's acceptable to use "industry solutions" (lower case) in some contexts, as in "our industry solutions enable users..."
- **Never** reference as "GS1 Canada Industry Managed Solutions"
- Occasional broad reference to "IMs" is acceptable but only after using the full term with IMS in brackets on first use. For example, "ECCnet Industry Managed Solutions (IMs)..."
- Individual IMS names always start with ECCnet and are always title case: ECCnet New Item Setup, ECCnet eCommerce Content, etc.
- When referring to the type of content being captured, shared, etc. use lower case: planogram content, ecommerce content, etc.
 - For example, do not reference as planogram IMS content, etc.
- ECCnet Industry Managed Solutions are non-proprietary and developed through industry direction to address common, industry-wide, non-competitive business process issues.
- ECCnet Industry Managed Solutions contain tools (ProSYNC, The Vault, etc.) and services (content capture) to support business processes.
 - Do not refer to our IMs as services as they contain both tools and services.

Sector and Industry Language

- Healthcare and pharmacy are sectors, while grocery, foodservice and general merchandise are industries.
- Sector and industry names are lower case (healthcare sector, grocery industry, etc.) unless being referenced as the board: Foodservice Board, Pharmacy Board, etc. For example, do not capitalize "pharmaceutical" unless it's part of a title such as Pharmaceutical Board or ECCnet Pharmaceutical Content.
- Branded tool names are always capitalized: Barcode Generator, Product Certification, The Vault.

In Network vs. Out of Network

In Network

This refers to GS1 global standards, “in network” standards (like GTINs and GDSN), associated global services (like Verified by GS1), subscription to GS1 Canada, prefix/identity key licensing, participation in standards development work—anything that is determined and governed globally and used by member organizations all over the world.

Out of Network

This refers to anything governed by GS1 Canada locally, by our boards, and is associated with all IMS, software licensing, content capture and content management, and aligned to Canadian-specific trading and regulatory requirements. For example, ECCnet Registry and our ECCnet Industry Managed Solutions.

Neutrality and Anti-Competition Laws

To ensure we remain outside of anti-competition laws, we must always reinforce our neutral position and industry-direction. We are a **neutral, not-for-profit association**. We are **directed by industry** to solve help solve **common, non-competitive process issues** through GS1 standards and the development of **non-proprietary solutions (not customized)** that will benefit all of industry.

To maintain our neutral position, we must refrain from language that’s partial, shows favouritism, is too promotional or comes across as a sales pitch.

Data recipients may require that their trading partners use GS1 standards, but that must always be a decision made by them, and not be interpreted as something GS1 Canada is mandating - we can educate, inform and advocate but NOT mandate.

Incorrect language (both written and verbal) presents an opportunity for for-profit competitors to take legal action against us, so we must always ensure our language is neutral and onside with competition regulations.

For example:

What We Can Say:

- We provide authentic GS1 barcode numbers.
- We are the only GS1 Member Organization in Canada.
- Unique identification means unique within the GS1 global system.

What We Can’t Say:

- We are the sole providers of barcodes and barcode numbers.
- Only GTINs licensed through GS1 are legitimate.
- We need to fight unauthorized barcode sellers.

GS1 Canada’s Operating Principles

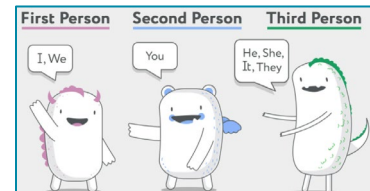
Always ensure your writing is aligned to our operating principles.

- We are a neutral, not-for-profit association, governed by industry.
- Industry investments and priorities are decided through a five-stage gate process. We do not move forward through the stages without board approval and industry support at each stage.
- ECCnet Industry Managed Solutions are intended to solve non-competitive business process issues.
- ECCnet Industry Managed Solutions are non-proprietary, industry-wide and based on global standards.
- All solutions are created through our unique community management process.
- Our solutions enable companies of all sizes to participate.
- Our solutions deliver one-to-many value.
- Industry protocols enable critical mass adoption to deliver maximum value to industry.
- We do not create solutions for a single stakeholder.
- Fees are based on a cost recovery basis and are regularly reconciled and audited.

Writing Quick Tips

Use this checklist to create compelling content that connects with your audience. You can [print this page](#) as a separate document for quick reference.

- Are you clear on the objective of your communication? What is the purpose of your document?
- Are your key messages relevant to your intended audience, whether internal or external? Why will they care?
- Is your singular call-to-action clear? What action do you want your reader to take? Are you including a link to additional content that supports your objective?
- Are you being as clear and concise as you can be? Have you considered your audience's familiarity with GS1 Canada language and processes? Read what you've written from your readers' perspective to streamline and remove unnecessary jargon.
- Do you have any run-on sentences? Short, simple sentences are key to ensuring readers grasp points easily, so if your sentence is more than two lines, consider restructuring for readability.
- If you're including an acronym, did you spell it out with the acronym in brackets the first time it appeared?
- Is your style consistent throughout your document? Common inconsistencies include:
 - Use of first, second or third person
 - Bullet structure (start every bullet with either an active verb or noun, and end every bullet with either a period or no period - never a mix)
 - Use of tense (future, present or past).
- Is your messaging aligned to GS1 Canada's operating principles and anti-competition rules?
- Is your content on the appropriate [branded template](#)?
- Have the right people reviewed and approved?
- Have you done a final proofread? ALWAYS proof-read your content or have someone less familiar with the content proofread it before sending.



Remember: It is your responsibility as the author of your content to ensure that it's clear and understandable to your readers.

Spelling ABCs

Canadian spelling tends to waver between forms used in both the United States and the United Kingdom. In many cases, there is no clear Canadian standard.

Common Misspellings

- The plural of GTIN is GTINs, not GTIN's
- Licence - the noun has a 'c' (prefix licence)
- License - the verb has an 's' (licensing)
- Toward - not toward(s)

Canadian Spelling

- Always use Canadian spelling. This includes organization (not organisation), honour (not honor), favourite (not favorite), centre (not center), metre (not meter) and paycheque (not paycheck).
- Make sure your keyboard is set to English (Canada) keyboard. There is a shortcut for this if you hover over ENG at the far right of your taskbar. For French, hover over FR at the far right of your taskbar and select Français (Canada) Clavier Canadien multilingue standard.
- When in doubt about how a word is spelled, consult the [Canada.ca Content Style Guide](#) to align with Government of Canada usage.

Verbs Ending in *ise/ize* and Their Derived Forms

- prioritize, prioritizing
- standardize, standardization
- organize, organization

One Word

- barcode
- coordinate (no hyphen)
- database
- ecommerce (no hyphen)
- email (no hyphen)
- foodservice
- healthcare
- myGS1
- offsite
- omnichannel
- online (no hyphen)
- paycheque
- percent
- reopening
- username
- website
- login (adjective or noun) and log in (verb)
 - "Your username and password together are your login." (noun)
 - "login page" (adjective)
 - "To log in . . ." (verb)

Two Words

- check in (verb)
- check box
- data pool
- lower case
- upper case
- web pages
- work group

When to Capitalize and When to Use Lower Case

- Always capitalize proper names such as Adobe Acrobat, Windows Explorer, ECCnet Industry Managed Solutions, TrueSource™ Dashboard, etc.
- Always use lower case for descriptive or generic terms such as trading partner, data provider, solution, email, ecommerce, home page, intranet, web browser, website, etc.

- Headers should always be title case. Do not capitalize articles, prepositions or coordinating conjunctions: “a”, “if”, “and”, “to”, etc.
- If a corporate name or logo is lower case for stylistic purposes, such as “amazon”, capitalize the first letter when referencing in any copy, “Amazon”.
- Capitalize the first letter of each word in the full name of institutions or organizations (e.g., Shoppers Drug Mart) but lowercase general references such as drugstore.
- Kosher and halal should always be lower case.
- While full names are capitalized (Board of Governors), use lower case for the short form (the board).

Capitalized

- Service and tool names, such as Barcode Generator, The Vault, Enhanced Assets, ECCnet Industry Managed Solutions
- Board of Governors
- Titles of official publications, e.g., Food for Thought
- Institution names, e.g., Canadian Food Inspection Agency
- Initiatives, e.g., Canada Plastics Pact
- Acronyms are the only places all caps should be used
 - Exception: myGS1

Lower Case

- global standards
- system of standards
- data providers, data recipients, trading partners, suppliers, manufacturers, distributors and retailers, healthcare providers, shared service organizations and group purchasing organizations
- healthcare sector, grocery industry, etc.

Writing and Grammar Guidelines

Ampersands

Do not use “&” - spell out “and”

Apostrophes

For a possessive ending in an s, use s’. For example: Subscribers’ questions can be answered through email or by phone.

Acronyms

The first time an acronym appears in a document, it should always be preceded by the fully spelled out term followed by the acronym in parentheses. The acronym alone can be used in subsequent references.

If the acronym or term is unlikely to be familiar to the audience, explain it. As the author of your content, you’re responsible for ensuring it’s clear and understandable.

Example:

- Correct: The Global Data Synchronization Network (GDSN) allows companies to share data.
- Incorrect: GDSN allows companies to share data.

Addresses

- Abbreviate street types, street direction and province or territory. Single-letter abbreviations are followed by a period, for example: 36 King St. E.
- Use the correct abbreviations for provinces and territories.
- Insert two spaces between the province or territory abbreviation and the postal code.
- Use upper case to write the letters in the postal code.
- Don't use punctuation except for a hyphen between the unit designator and the civic number.

Bolding

Use bold for emphasis only sparingly—the more you use it, the less effective it is.

Bullets

Bulleted lists are used for cases where the order of information is not important. Follow these rules when writing bulleted lists:

- A bulleted list should contain at least two bullets.
- Introduce the list with at least one lead-in sentence (or sentence fragment) ending with a colon.
- After the colon, capitalize the first word of each list item, even if it is a single word.
- Use a period after every bullet point that is a sentence.
- Use a period after every bullet point that completes an introductory sentence.

Example:

- I like working at GS1 Canada because of the:
 - People.
 - Proximity to my home.
 - Opportunities to develop my skills.

Punctuation in bulleted lists:

- Items consisting of one or more sentences, or two or more fragments, use full stops.
- If one item in a list receives a full stop, all other items in that list do as well regardless of whether they are sentence fragments or full sentences.
- Use either all sentences or all fragments for bullet points, not a mixture. Place only one idea in each bulleted item. If you need to include more information to explain an idea, use sub-bullets, but use them sparingly.

Colons

Use colons to introduce lists and tables.

Commas

- Do not use the Oxford or serial comma, meaning no comma before the final “and” in a series.
- Use commas to separate words and numbers when confusion may result
 - Example: Instead of 20, 50 came.
- Use commas to separate years from months and days
 - Example: March 31, 1949 was the date that Newfoundland joined Confederation.
- When in doubt, err on the side of fewer commas.

Contractions

Contractions, such as you’re, it’s, we’re, can be used selectively for friendlier, less formal communications.

Common errors:

- You are = you’re not your
- They are = they’re not their

Currency

Do not use periods for currency without cents.

- Correct: C\$800
- Incorrect: C\$800.00 This also applies to low figures such as \$5.
- If a figure includes cents, write \$100.50. For values below a dollar, write 50 cents.
- There are no spaces between the dollar sign and the monetary amount, e.g., \$800 not \$ 800.
- Do not capitalize million. When using the \$ symbol, do not repeat the word dollars.
- When a number that represents money is spelled out, use the word for the type of currency along with the number. For example, use the word “euro”, “dollars,” “yen,” or “pounds” with the number. When numerals are used for the amount, include the symbol for the currency type (such as “€” or “\$”).
 - Examples:

- Correct: Data synchronization saves the industry 15 million dollars per year.
- Correct: Data synchronization saves the industry \$15 million (€10.54 million) per year.

Dates

- When spelling out month, day and year, follow this format: January 5, 2015.
- If abbreviating month, follow this format: Jan. 5, 2015, with exception to never abbreviate May.
- When using month only, spell out month and follow this format: January 2015.
- Never use *th* as in 5th. Exception: the 15th of each month.
- Spell out days of the week.
- Use day/month/year order when abbreviating in this format: January 5, 2015 would be 5/1/2015

Date Ranges

Use "to" instead of an en dash in date ranges. For example:

- Monday to Friday
- March 29 to April 4
- Fiscal year 2015 to 2016

When specifying a month and date, never abbreviate numbers, such as first, second, third, or fourteenth, using the conventions "st," "nd," "rd," or "th."

Ellipses

Ellipses should be three spaced periods with spaces before and after the periods: . . .

Not three periods in a row directly after a word: ...

As for ellipses that come at the end of a sentence, use a period followed by an ellipsis: "This sentence is now complete. . . ."

Email Addresses

Spell out an email addresses as opposed to using a hyperlink.

- Correct: Contact us at ProductCertificationSupport@gs1ca.org.
- Incorrect: Contact us [here](#).

Font

Use Verdana for shared documents such as Microsoft PowerPoint presentations or Microsoft Word documents.

Footnotes, Citations

When citing facts and figures, it is important that they are as recent as possible to ensure relevance. For example, a 2010 statistic about ecommerce is basically irrelevant, unless it's being used as a benchmark or past example.

- Well-known and established facts do not require citations.
 - Example: Canada Day is July 1.
- Data and statistics do require citations, and these are dependent upon the style of document you are creating.
 - When writing an article for the web or e-documents (newsletters, emails, etc.), attributions can be done through a hot link that will take the reader to the original document.
 - Example: A survey found that [83% of respondents like marshmallows](#) (with a hot link on the stat that leads to an article from *Food and Stuff* magazine where this came from).
 - When writing for a document that is more official and/or will be printed (a brochure, for example), attribute by making direct reference to the piece in question. Example: A survey conducted by *Food and Stuff* found that 83% of respondents like marshmallows.
 - For board reports, sector reports and other more detailed information, footnotes are required and should follow APA style.

There is no one way to footnote. Different sources ask for different notations (white paper, statistics, industry article, annual reports, etc.). Most businesses use the APA style for citations. See how to cite your specific need here: <https://apastyle.apa.org/>

Headers

Use title case (where all major words are capitalized) for all headers.

- Do not put a period at the end of a header.
- Sub-headers should also use title case.

Hyphens

- Used for compound adjectives, e.g., high-quality work. Do not use hyphens with adverbs (ending in -ly), e.g., highly skilled workers.
- Hyphenate most compounds with three or more words, such as up-to-date. In most cases, compound words used directly before a noun are hyphenated.

Examples:

- Decision making is one of his responsibilities because his decision-making skills are superb.
- I'm good at problem solving because problem-solving activities are educational.

Not All Hyphens are Created Equal

Hyphens and dashes have different uses—they aren't interchangeable.

A hyphen (-) is a punctuation mark that's used to join words or parts of words.

A dash is longer than a hyphen and is commonly used to indicate a range or a pause.

Hyphens are used for compound nouns, such as self-restraint. They are also used with a compound modifier before a noun: closed-door meeting.

Hyphenated Words

- broker-distributors
 - check-in (when used as a noun)
 - cost-recovery
 - well-being (not wellbeing or well being)
 - industry-directed
 - industry-driven
 - machine-to-machine
 - non-competitive
 - non-proprietary
 - not-for-profit
 - one-to-many
 - on-site
 - order-to-cash
 - point-of-sale
 - standards-based
 - stage-gate
 - start-up
 - third-party (when used as an adjective, such as third-party partner)
- up-to-date is hyphenated when it precedes the noun it modifies. For example, ECCnet Registry allows data providers to share **up-to-date** product data with trading partners. When the phrase comes after the noun it modifies, there are no hyphens. For example, Recall Ready ensures a company's recall plans are **up to date**.

Prefixes and suffixes

A prefix or suffix usually combines with a word without a hyphen or space, as in dehumidify and lifelike. However, if the meaning could be misconstrued, a hyphen may be necessary. Example: He recovered in time to attend the meeting, after he re-covered the ottoman.

Also, use a hyphen when the word following the prefix begins with the same vowel as the one with which the prefix ends. Example: re-educate.

Italics

Italics should be used for:

- Titles of publications, including newsletters *The Beat*, *Food for Thought* and *Coming Enhancements*.
- Foreign words, including French and Latin.

Latin Abbreviations: e.g., i.e., etc.

- e.g. - to give the reader examples of something in running text, use the initials "e.g.", meaning "for example" or "such as".
 - A comma should always follow the second full stop in "e.g."
 - Example: Products modified for seasonal reasons (e.g., holiday packs) should carry a unique GTIN-12.
- i.e. - typically used to introduce a rephrase or elaboration of an already stated point in the sentence.
 - There must be a comma after the second full stop, along with one before the abbreviation.
 - Example:
 - All employees receive the standard discount, i.e., 20 percent.
- etc. – typically used at the end of a list.
 - Include a comma after the word before "etc."
 - Example: GS1 subscribers have access to ECCnet Industry Managed Solutions such as ECCnet Marketing Content, ECCnet New Item Setup, ECCnet Pharmaceutical Content, etc.

Numbers

- Do not capitalize spelled out numbers, for example million.
- Spell out numbers one through nine. Ten and above should use numerals unless they are at the beginning of a sentence.
- Use numerals for all numbers above nine, except in sentences that contain numbers both above and below nine. Example: There were 12 notifications sent and only 8 replies received.
- Use a comma for numbers 1,000 and above.
- Capitalize a noun followed by a number denoting place in a numbered series.
 - Example: Chapter 10, Cloud 9, Figure 13
- Examples of writing ages: a 10-year-old child, a person who is 30, those 40 to 65 years old.
- For measurements, use a number and spell out the measurement.
 - Example: 5 feet and 6 metres.
- When referencing fractions, spell out rather than use symbols
 - A quarter or one quarter (not $\frac{1}{4}$)
 - Half (not $\frac{1}{2}$)
 - Note that fractions used as adjectives or adverbs are hyphenated: a one-thirds share or a three-fifths majority.
- When describing numbers of items, always use a plural. For example, 2 products, -2 degrees. The only exceptions are 1 and -1. When describing a fraction of 1, use a plural. For example, 0.75 millimetres.
 - When describing multiple items, never use the bracketed letter "s".
 - For example:
 - Wrong: The product(s) in your list are subject to verification.
 - Right: The products in your list are subject to verification.

Numbered Lists and Steps

Numbered lists are used for cases where the order of information is important, such as multiple-step procedures. Follow these rules when writing multiple-step procedures:

- Use clear, present-tense, imperative verbs (for example, click, select or modify) to tell readers what to do in a step.
- Write short and concise sentences. If the text is too confusing or too long, readers will not be able to follow the instructions properly.
- Give readers only one instruction per step. However, you can combine up to three short instructions into one step if they occur in the same location.
- Have no more than 12 steps in a procedure. If there are more, you must review the procedure and determine if it can be split into smaller standalone procedures.
- Steps should be complete sentences with periods at the end of each step.

Percentage

Use the % symbol when citing numbers, do not spell out percent

Quotations

- When describing a conversation or a quoted remark, periods and commas always go inside quotation marks.
- Colons and semicolons always go outside quotation marks.
- Question marks and exclamation marks go inside the quotation marks.
- Single quotes should only be used for embedded quotations.

Spacing

There is **one space** after a period, exclamation mark or question mark (not two). Because proportional fonts.

Symbols

In general, avoid the use of symbols and spell the word out instead.

- Exceptions would be the \$ or other well-known currency. Spell out lesser-known currencies, such as the Russian ruble.
- If there is a symbol in the title of a document you are quoting, keep the symbol.

Times

- Do not use 00 for exact hours. Use lower case letters with no space between them for am and pm. Leave a space between the time and the time-of-day indicator.
- Avoid using the 24-hour clock—write 11 pm instead of 23:00.
- Use “to” rather than a dash for time spans: 9 am to 5 pm.
- Avoid using “o’clock”.
Correct: Shutdown will begin at 11 am.
Incorrect: Shutdown will begin at 11 a.m.
Incorrect: Shutdown will begin at 11:00 am.

Underlining

Use underlining for links only.

New additions to this guide are always welcome – contact someone on your friendly Marketing and Communications team with your suggestions!